

**HISTORY IN THE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS;
METHODS, COURSES OF
STUDY, BIBLIOGRAPHIES**

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History in the Elementary Schools; Methods, Courses of Study, Bibliographies by W. F. Bliss

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HISTORY IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

METHODS, COURSES OF STUDY,
BIBLIOGRAPHIES

BY

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INTRODUCTION

THE course of study outlined in the following pages is first of all practicable. It has been subjected to the test of teachers and supervisors in elementary schools of the country and the city, and of Normal Training Schools. It is the result of years of experience in public schools conducted under ordinary conditions. It is easily adaptable to either graded or ungraded schools.

While it provides for a complete course of study in history from the first to the eighth grades inclusive, it is so arranged that it may be used in connection with any rational plan of correlation of history with other subjects, especially with industrial training, literature and geography. This is particularly true of the outlines for the first four grades. In ungraded schools and those only partially graded, doubtless the demands of the daily program render the adoption of some scheme of combining and coördinating allied subjects an actual necessity. This course provides the desired "core" or basis for the correlation of history, geography and literature and, in the primary grades, manual training, in a perfectly natural and interesting manner.

The course has also been prepared with the view of combining several grades into single sections or classes. For example, an ungraded rural school may be arranged into a primary and a grammar grade section. Type stories

from the outline of the first four grades may be selected for the primary section, and from the outline of the fifth and sixth years for the grammar sections. The stories will be found exceedingly interesting to all the children of the respective groups, and if made the basis for work in manual training, literature and geography, as before suggested, all three subjects can be carried along with pleasure and profit without undue encroachment on the time allotment of the daily program. The outline of United States History for the seventh and eighth grades is, of course, available for any grammar school, graded or ungraded.

Most of the books and other equipment needed in carrying out this course may be supplied by the school district at very little cost. Practically everything outside of the books and some drawing material can be improvised by the resourceful teacher with the help of pupils and parents. In fact, one of the desirable purposes of the course is to stimulate the ingenuity of teachers and pupils as well as the sympathetic assistance of parents. Pupils should not be required to purchase more than the texts and materials authorized by the formal course of study prescribed by the school authorities.

This course of study had been completely elaborated and was in working operation some time before the Report of the Committee of Eight of the American Historical Association was published. It is pleasing to note that it embodies the spirit and purpose of that suggestive document. The main contrasts lie in the direction of practicability and adaptability to the requirements of elementary schools as at present organized. The report of the Committee of Eight seems to have been prepared from the viewpoint

of the so-called "cycle" method of teaching history — a cycle of local, then one of general, history alternating throughout the grades. The essential differences between the two courses consist in the sequence of topics, the extent of the bibliographies, and the specific directions as to methods of teaching.

(1) The Report devotes more time in the primary grades to American History, omitting altogether stories illustrating primitive civilization. In the fourth and fifth grades American History stories occupy the whole year.

(2) The Report does not introduce stories of Greece and Rome until the sixth grade, the work in which is completed by stories from later European History.

(3) History of the United States is resumed in the seventh grade, and is continued into the eighth, which closes with a resumption of modern European History. It does not seem likely that such an illogical and incoherent course of study would ever commend itself as a whole to any large number of the supervisors and teachers of history in our elementary schools.

In the following course American History has by no means been neglected in the lower grades. On the contrary, every grade from the second to the sixth inclusive ends with typical stories of the history of our own country, but they have been introduced on the supposition that they illustrate naturally and logically the fundamental theme of these grades. Throughout the primary grades this theme is primitive civilization, the stories being gleaned from the primitive life of many peoples, ancient and modern, beginning with the tree dwellers and ending with the primitive civilization of American Indians and pioneer white men in

America. The fifth and sixth grades are mainly occupied with stories illustrating life in the Middle Ages in Europe, and in the modern period in Europe and America, the principal themes being the progress of civilization, the development of nationalities, and the struggle for freedom, emphasis everywhere being laid on the life of the people. In the seventh and eighth grades the formal study of the history of the United States is pursued, closing with a course in elementary civics, which takes the direction of a discussion of the relations between the citizen and the community under present social and industrial conditions. The flexibility of the course, however, will permit it to be adapted easily to the use of schools in which it is desirable to follow closely the Report of the Committee of Eight.

The principal claims for consideration of this course are:

- (1) Its practicability, adaptability to any conditions.
- (2) Its logical consistency.
- (3) Its vital interest to the pupils.
- (4) The sense of the *unity* of history which it arouses in the minds of teachers and pupils.
- (5) The selected, workable bibliography, containing book lists especially suitable for the use of young pupils and of teachers who have had only the minimum of historical training.
- (6) The introduction of a variety of methods of representation or reproduction by the pupils in the form of drawing, sand and clay modeling, handicrafts, simple dramas, etc.

The course claims no special credit on the score of originality. Like most practical and useful plans, professions and institutions, it is eclectic. Much of its merit, if it

possesses any, is due to the suggestiveness of the work of Jane Andrews, John Preston True, Prof. E. W. Kemp, Miss Katherine Dopp, Prof. Lucy Salmons, and others. The excellent books or reports of all of these are frequently cited in the following pages.

Beyond all, however, the author is indebted to the patience, the intelligence and the resourcefulness of various teachers in elementary schools formerly under his supervision, and especially to the student teachers of the State Normal School of San Diego, California, for sympathetic and efficient assistance in working out this course of study.

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